

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

September 22nd, 2020

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday September 22nd, 2020 at 7:05pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker and associate member Sarah Carrier were present. Associate Member Scott Lever was not present. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: N/A

Members of the Public: Alan Jones, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Henry Fenollosa, Josh Fenollosa, Julie McLaughlin, Lily Chung, and Lindsay Keach Bronstein

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

N/A

Menotomy Tree Placement Discussion & Gifting Procedure Review

Ms. Mayer spoke on a tree gifting request that was approved by the Commission during their July 14th Meeting. The original request was to plant a Dawn Redwood tree at Menotomy Rocks Park that was received from a family celebrating a 50th anniversary. The Commission voted on this matter and approved the donation under the condition that the Tree Warden select the tree's location. The Town's Tree Warden had already approved the species type prior to this.

Ms. Mayer stated that since approved, the location was selected and the tree planted. Several recent concerns have been received from members of the public regarding both the species, location of the tree planting and process. Ms. Mayer stated that she spoke with a landscape architect formerly from the neighborhood about this and that while the species type is not what this individual would have necessarily chosen, the location was sufficient. It was stated that the correct steps, as documented in the Commission's gifting policy, were followed for this donation as outlined in the July 14th meeting minutes. Notices are not required to be given to park abutters for tree donations and benches.

Ms. Canniff agreed that the correct steps required for all tree donations were followed and the approval was fair/just. She stated that she personally liked the location selected for the Dawn Redwood. Ms. Carrier asked if Mr. Connelly visited the site with the Town's Tree Warden to select this location. Mr. Connelly stated that he did not. Ms. Carrier noted that the Commission was not aware of the species type at the time of approval and knew only that the Tree Warden had already approved the species being suggested for donation. Ms. Carrier then read out loud an excerpt from the current policy and recommended that there be a more detailed process in place moving forward. She believes that donation requests should only be approved for locations which have items/trees that need to be replaced or for locations with projects taking place currently/in the near future.

Ms. Mayer also read from the current policy, summarizing that the placement of a donated item is at the sole discretion of the Park and Recreation Commission. Ms. Mayer followed up by saying that the intent of creating this policy was to facilitate individual donations, which includes the opportunity for individuals to donate items for future or upcoming projects. The Commission could direct individuals interested in donating to a specific project if one was occurring, as has been done in the past. However, in many cases, individuals are looking to donate a tree/bench that will be placed at a specific location, like this case and Menotomy Rocks Park. Typically, the donation is for a loved one who had a special connection to the specific property being requested. It's rare when

they do not have a location in mind. Ms. Mayer stated that if someone does not make a request for a specific park, the Commission typically does look at how this item could be incorporated in current or upcoming projects.

With this explanation, Ms. Carrier suggested adding additional layers to the current process. Mr. Connelly suggested adding wording similar to the following: The Town's Tree Warden will approve the species and location. Once a location is selected, it will be marked and sent to the Park and Recreation Commission for review and approval. The Commission will then review the selected location to see if there are any issues. Once the location is approved by the Commission, the item can be placed.

Ms. Rothenberg suggested that a record of all projects should be kept track of in relation to its master plan. This will provide information to reference for current plantings and where/when plantings and other items are needed and will be helpful to make decisions for the placement/replacement of plantings and items moving forward. The example Ms. Rothenberg used was Lussiano and how funding was not available for over (40) proposed plantings. Having this information to reference will allow potential placement of plantings in the originally planned locations in the future.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that the department had been working with Adam Kurowski on keeping this information in the Town's GIS System. All information on new plantings should be given to him so that the information can be tracked and saved overtime. Ms. Rothenberg stated that she also likes the location of the tree at Menotomy Rocks Park. She added that the Commission needs to trust/support the location selected by the Tree Warden. She does not anticipate that this location will interfere with any recreational activities.

Mr. Connelly stated that this is a great idea and will send Mr. Kurowski any new plans and plantings moving forward. Mr. Connelly also stated that it would be ideal to create a separate data base where the Commission can track all planned plantings for projects that were not implemented, in addition to specific locations where they would like to add new plantings. Ms. Rothenberg believes this data base should include furnishings as well.

Ms. Carrier likes the idea of having a separate internal database which would allow them to keep even more detail than GIS. It was stated that, while the Tree Warden is selecting a location from the perspective of what is the best location for the plant, requiring the Commission to approve the selected location will allow them to assess if the location makes sense from a recreational and historical perspective. Mr. Connelly stated that he will ask if there is any way for plans to be scanned by the Tree Warden moving forward.

Friends Clean Up-Requests: Crusher Lost – 10/3/2020, Robbins Farm -11/7/20

(2) Requests were received about organizing park cleanups by two different "friend groups". These requests are for Crusher Lot on October 3rd and at Robbins Farm on November 7th. Ms. Mayer stated that Mr. Connelly has been working with the Board of Health regarding these requests and that policies will need to be put in place in relation to COVID-19. Ms. Mayer summarized these conditions: that all volunteers must pre-register, so that a variety of information can be collected; No individuals will be allowed to sign up on the day of the cleanup; All volunteers must wear masks and maintain a social distance of 6ft or more at all times; Organizers must make sure that there is no shared equipment between users; as well as making hand sanitizer available to volunteers before and after the cleanup; a maximum of (24) individuals would be allowed to register and that these individuals will then be divided into smaller groups.

Mr. Connelly confirmed that all protocols from the Phase 3, Step 1 guidelines must be followed and added that the BOH wants to reference the State guidelines with this as well. Lilly Chung was present on the call representing one of the friends groups and had no questions. She did request that Mr. Connelly send over all the guidelines which must be enforced. Mr. Connelly confirmed that these would be sent to both friend groups tomorrow. There were no additional comments from Commissioners on the matter. Mr. Connelly stated that this was on the agenda to make Commissions aware of the requests and that there was no need for an official vote.

Correspondence Received: Mountain Biking and Crusher Lot, School Department, Use of Park Property, Feedback on Reservoir Project, Basketball Court at McClennen Request

Ms. Mayer outlined that there was a wide variety of correspondence received regarding Mountain Biking and the Crusher Lot. This information was shared with Commission Members in the informational packet. It was noted by Mr. Connelly that a majority of this correspondence was received prior to the last Commission Meeting, but was not included in that meeting's information packet as it came in after the informational packet had been distributed. Mr. Connelly stated that the Commission will discuss this topic later during this meeting under the Mountain Biking Task Group item.

With respect to School Dept. use of park properties, Mr. Connelly reported that, following the discussion from last meeting, Peirce School is the only location where a tent is looking to be placed. This area is currently not actively being permitted and there should be no issue with this request.

He continued by stating that all feedback received in correspondence regarding the Reservoir Project is being sent directly to KZLA.

Mr. Connelly reported that an individual reached out advocating for an outdoor basketball court to be built at McClennen Park. Mr. Connelly stated that this request has been noted and will be considered when a capital projects is planned for McClennen in the future.

Capital Project Updates

Lussiano Playground

Mr. Connelly, Ms. Canniff, Ms. Rothenberg, and the project contractor met onsite at the Lussiano Playground to walk through the punch list. Mr. Connelly stated that the contractor is currently determining what will be used as screening for the porta potty location. Fencing will be placed this week around the newly seeded areas, as well as installation of the memorial plaque. Mr. Connelly stated that the intent is to leave fencing up until October 1st to allow for the seeding to take. Protective snow fencing will then be added around specific areas that need more time. The goal is to have the new playground open the first weekend of October. Mr. Connelly believes the project was a success and looks great. He will be working on writing a news article on the opening. Ms. Rothenberg agreed with Mr. Connelly that the project has transformed the park. She is very happy with the appearance of the new guardrail and is excited to see the playground open and children playing on it. Ms. Rothenberg also credited the job done by the contractor, JAM, and how easy they were to work with. Mr. Connelly agreed adding that this was the first time Worcester, MA based JAM worked with the Town. He stated that they were outstanding and very amenable to design changes that were requested on site. JAM was flexible on the few changes needed. Ms. Lasker added that he also believes the site looks great and is excited to see the facility open. He believes that JAM did a great job for an affordable price. Mr. Lasker thanked Ms. Rothenberg and Ms. Canniff for all their efforts on the project with Ms. Mayer also thanking Ms. Carrier and all the neighbors for their contributions to this project.

Arlington Reservoir Phase 1 and 2

Mr. Connelly reported that not much has changed regarding the status of the pilot path. The path has been placed, but the feathering of the existing path in with the rubber has yet to be completed. Mr. Connelly will be checking in with the contractor to make sure this is done. Mr. Connelly also stated that there has been no change with regard to the electrical access issue. Mr. Connelly will contact Mr. Feeney about making this a priority.

As for Phase 2 of the Reservoir Project, Mr. Connelly reported that he had his weekly meeting with KZLA. During this, they reviewed the feedback received from Commission and public. KZLA is currently working on a 2nd design set, which will be sent out for pricing. The concerns regarding the project's timeline and timeframe of the parking lot installation, discussed during the last Commission Meeting, were also brought up. KZLA has developed a new project timeline, which was sent to Commission Members, and will be making adjustments as necessary.

Mr. Connelly asked Commissioners to share any concerns they had at this time. It was stated that although (5) public meetings have been held regarding the project, no formal public hearing has been held with notification to a certified abutters list. That public hearing will occur in the near future with all abutters being formally notified. Ms. Mayer stated that, while communication and participation has been very good, this is a required step and needs to be done before the RFP for the project is sent out.

Ms. Mayer continued by stating that one aspect of the project that needs additional discussion relates to the water access for ADA requirements. Mr. Connelly stated that the existing cement access ramp is not up to code and any plans to replace the current ramp in the same location would require hand railings on both sides due to the slope. Mr. Connelly said that one option is to look at placing the water access ramp in an alternative location which has a different slope. Another option discussed with KZLA is the idea of using temporary matting for water accessibility. This matting would be staked down and the Town would have the ability to remove the matting during the offseason. The location of the water access ramp could also be moved from year to year. Mr. Connelly stated the importance of having a water access ramp for those who need it. However, the one currently in place is not frequently used. The goal is to provide individuals with mobility issues the same access or even more than what is currently in place. Mr. Connelly believes a movable access ramp makes more sense and that even more access could be provided. Ms. Mayer followed up by stating that if they move forward with the mobility mats solution, they could ideally have remaining funds that would allow the purchase of a beach accessible wheelchair, which would be a significant improvement and amenity. Mr. Lasker thinks having a mobility mat rather than a permanent ramp is a great idea. He requested if that if this plan is selected and frees up funding then the Commission should look into an irrigation system for the grass area. Mr. Lasker has concerns that no irrigation system is currently in the plan and would hate to see this lawn area be unsuccessful. Mr. Walker asked if a hand railing would be needed if they were to move forward with the matting. Mr. Connelly responded stating that with the possibility of placing the structure on a grade under 5% and designated as a permanent feature, it appears a railing would not be needed.

Ms. Carrier stated that she wants to maintain accessibility to the sand and water play features in the current design. If the project is to move forward with a moveable ramp, the location for these features may need to move, which could lead to issues with the flow of the design. Mr. Connelly stated this is a good point and will make KZLA aware of maintaining accessibility if a moveable ramp is used. Ms. Canniff shared that she believes that this option is a win-win, as it will provide even more access with the portable ramp providing more access on/from the sand area of the beach. Ms. Mayer believes that if a mobility mat is used, it may even become a main entry point to the water for many users. Mr. Connelly noted that that KZLA has also been working on an updated design in relation to the playground features. This will be shared with Commissioners once completed.

Feasibility Study

Mr. Connelly stated that an RFP for a capital plan feasibility study has been put out to selected individuals and that (3) proposals were received. The department has the funding allocated to move forward with any of the proposals, but will most likely not go forward with the highest priced. Mr. Connelly hopes that by next week a successful designer will be selected to move forward with the study. He is excited as he believes the completion of a feasibility study will be very beneficial for the Department and Commission moving forward. The information from the study will provide a guideline and plan for capital projects for the next 5 to 6 years. Mr. Connelly will provide the Commission with more information on this at the next meeting.

Task Group Updates

Town Wide Playground

Mr. Connelly recently met with the Deputy Town Manager and the Town's Financial Analyst on the capital project funding requests that were submitted by Recreation. He stated that there were reservations regarding these requests. Their initial concerns were not related to the amount of funding requested or the projects being requested, but rather that there has not been a history of Recreation making similar capital requests in recent years. Mr. Connelly explained that when the Town is putting together the capital budget, they look at past and future requests. Since Recreation has not requested similar amounts in the recent past, they were unaware of the extent of future projects, which caught them off guard. Mr. Connelly does not believe that these requests will be denied, rather that they just wanted to learn more. Mr. Connelly walked them through each of the submissions, explaining that these requests were all based around need and priority and the Commission's recommendations. Mr. Connelly stated that the Deputy Town Manager and the Town's Financial Analyst were very responsive to this, as it allowed them to see the amount of thought and research that went into making these recommendations. Ms.

Mayer confirmed that the requests and process in recent years has been very different. Overall, Mr. Connelly is happy how things went and believes that they are in a good spot.

Reservoir Playground

Please see the information above.

Mountain Biking

Mr. Lasker gave the update on the Mountain Biking Task Group. From his perspective, the group's visit to Hill's Hill went very well. Mr. Lasker believes that riding has already been happening there on makeshift trails, similar to the Crusher Lot. Hill's Hill has good terrain for riding and he believes the property has a lot of potential. Members of the task group had a productive conversation regarding this. Mr. Lasker stated that they will be setting a time to visit Menotomy Rocks Park and possibly another location in Town. Mt. Gilboa was discussed as a possible location to visit, but this is conservation land. Mr. Lasker said to track information and how visits go, meeting minutes will be written. Josh Fenollosa, who was present on the call, put together the meeting minutes for the Hill's Hill visit.

Mr. Connelly stated that he had correspondence with Michael Ratner, who is the Land Steward for the Crusher Lot, and met with Mr. Ratner onsite for a walkthrough of the property. He stated that this was a great experience as it allowed him to see the property and trails from Mr. Ratner's perspective, which helped make some of the public correspondence received make more sense. This included new trails vs old trails, and naturally falling trees vs ones that have been placed. Mr. Ratner asked that as Land Steward, what should he do if he sees individuals building trails or features. Mr. Connelly noted that this is a difficult spot as he is just a volunteer and requested that if Mr. Ratner sees anything being built with tools (clearings, mound, jumps, tree removal), to let Mr. Connelly know. He will then talk to the necessary individuals and take action. If someone is walking or riding on what appears to be a non-existent path, this does not need to be reported. He also let Mr. Ratner know that if a tree looks like it has been placed to intentionally block an existing trail, he is more than welcome to move it. Some trees blocking trails fell naturally and should be left as they naturally occurred.

Mr. Lasker added that members of the task group discussed what their goal is moving forward and decided that they will develop a pros and cons list of each site visited. This will include information related to the location of the property, parking, feature options, terrain, etc. This will help guide them as they go through the process.

Recreation & Rink Updates

Mr. Connelly stated that operations at the rink are going smoothly and there were no major items to report. Mr. Connelly shared information on the Department's Kid Care Center for Remote Learning, which is scheduled to start on November 5th. Recreation originally decided not to offer the Kid Care Afterschool Program this year due to the pandemic situation. Logistically and financially, it just did not make sense. However, Governor Baker recently made an allowance for remote learning centers to occur. Mr. Connelly stated that these learning centers are overseen and licensed through the EEC or a local board of health and allow for students to have a place to do their remote learning outside of home. This provides a service for parents who may not be able to be home or are in need of care during the day. Mr. Connelly stated this program will be overseen by individuals from the Kid Care Afterschool Staff and will operate out of Town Hall. Hours for the program will follow the school day schedule from 8:00am to 3:00pm daily, with Wednesdays operating only until 1:00pm. The program can take a maximum of (40) students (open to residents & children of Town employees), with children grouped in cohorts of up to (10). The goal of this program is to provide child care in an environment that will be safe and nurturing for learning. Mr. Connelly stated that he is very excited for this and that this program will operate as long as the current school schedule is in place - through the year if necessary. Mr. Walker asked about the space and connectivity. Mr. Connelly stated that internet connection will be provided, but students must bring their own devices. With students having (6) weeks of remote learning already, they should be fairly comfortable with the process. Ms. Rothberg asked if lunch services would be provided, adding that a letter has been sent to Arlington Public School students that free lunch services are available to all regardless of financial status. Recreation will be looking further into this.

Mr. Vaillette gave an update regarding the department's general program offerings. Registration for all fall/winter programs opened last week on September 14th. Registration was very well received by the community. About 50%

of the program offerings have already filled and have waitlists. Programs are scheduled to begin next week, with over 50 program sections beginning in a week's time.

Approval of Minutes – August 28th, 2020 and September 8th, 2020

Ms. Mayer brought up approval of meeting minutes for the Commission's Meeting on August 28th and September 8th. It was noted that the September 6th Meeting Minutes would be tabled to the next meeting to all more time for the Commission to review.

It was requested by the Commission to make some minor edits to the August 28th Meeting Minutes. The motion to approve the August 28th Commission Meeting Minutes with edits, was made by Mr. Lasker. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The Commission voted to approve the August 28th Meeting Minutes with the edits noted, 5-0 by roll call.

Comments and Items For Future Meetings

- Block Scheduling
- Tennis Court Signage and Permitting Review
- Afterschool and Preschool Program Review Period
- Business in Parks During State of Emergency Review and Possible Program Extension (*Ms. Rothenberg asked what the maximum number of people business can have attend a session or class. It was stated that the max is (25) people, which includes the instructor. Classes do not need to divide into smaller cohorts if social distancing of 6 feet is possible.*)

Other

- Ms. Canniff reported that Dallin School staff has had issues the past two days in relation to playground use during the school day. The playground is being used by members of the public as well during this time, which as a public park is allowed. However, with the goal being to social distance students away from others, when staff asks for the playground to be cleared they receive pushback from members of the public. The possibility of a public service announcement was discussed to request that members of the public do not use playgrounds during scheduled school recess times. Mr. Connelly thinks to completely prevent this; the only thing that can be done is to give schools full access to public playgrounds during specific timeframes. Ms. Rothenberg believes that this needs to be a broader discussion that involves the Board of Health. The Commission will look into this and continue the discussion of playground and field use by the public during school hours at the next meeting.
- Mr. Lasker stated that several children were setting up a volleyball net in the middle of the soccer field at Dallin last week. Mr. Lasker told them that they should not be doing this in the middle of the field, as youth soccer was scheduled to start soon. Mr. Lasker asked Mr. Connelly if there was any official policy regarding setting up nets on fields. Mr. Connelly stated that there is no official policy. Individuals are allowed to set up nets as long as they are not on permitted fields and spikes/stakes are not being used.
- It was questioned if a drumming class was officially permitted at McClennen. This was confirmed by Mr. Connelly. It was noted that this group should be holding their class near the baseball field, not on hill area as stated. Mr. Connelly will touch base with the group about their location. Mr. Connelly added that the Business in the Parks program has been very successful, with a variety of different types of business using spaces for activities including fitness, art, pottery, singing, music, etc.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Canniff. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 8:36pm.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette